

REMARKS

As a preliminary matter, Applicant thanks Examiner Paul Kang for the courtesy extended to Applicant's representative, Jacob M. Ward, Reg. No. 56,754, during the telephone interview on June 12, 2009. During the interview, it was discussed that the Mayle art does not disclose the step of "establishing a verified communication link", but instead describes a standard, non-verified Internet link for connecting a personal computer to a website server. The Examiner requested that the claims be amended to further define what is meant by the term "verified". The Examiner further suggested amendments clarifying that the communication link may only be verified between one of a predetermined and closed group of input sites, such as gift shops, hotel front desks, motel front desks, and amusement parks. Applicant has hereby amended the claims in accordance with the Examiner's suggestions. The Examiner's careful consideration of the application is sincerely appreciated.

Applicant has carefully studied the references cited by the Examiner and the Examiner's comments relative thereto.

Claims 1-2, 3-8, 10, 12-14, and 16-22 are pending in the application.

Claims 3, 9, 11, and 15 have been cancelled.

Claims 1, 8, 12, and 14 have been amended.

Support for the amended claims is found in the application as originally filed, for example, at page 3, lines 12-30. No new matter has been added.

Reconsideration of the application in light of the amendments and remarks made herein is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-8, 10, 12-13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over Mayle et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,542,936) in view of Seigel et al. (U.S. App. Pub. No. 2001/0051876). Claims 14, and 16-22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over Mayle-Seigel in view of Giordano et al. (U.S. App. Pub. No. 2006/0178986). The rejections are respectfully traversed in view of the presently amended claims.

Amended independent Claims 1, 8 and 14 recite the patentable limitations of the present invention as follows:

1. A method for communicating with electronic postcards comprising:
  - a) providing a server for processing electronic postcards;
  - b) selecting at least one input site remote from the server, wherein the at least one input site is selected from a predetermined group of input sites consisting of a gift shop, a hotel front desk, a motel front desk and a theme park, the at least one input site accessible to a plurality of senders of electronic postcards visiting the at least one input site;
  - c) establishing a verified communication link between the at least one input site and the server, wherein the verified communication link authenticates that incoming requests for electronic postcards originate from particular ones of the predetermined group of input sites;
  - d) providing a sender input device at the at least one input site for receiving input information associated with each of the senders including an addressee e-mail address;
  - e) providing a printed form for each sender upon which the input information is recorded including a message handwritten by the sender and inputting for each sender the input information to the input device;
  - f) generating an electronic postcard from the sender input information; and
  - g) transmitting the electronic postcard from the at least one input site to the server and from the server directly to the addressee e-mail address.
8. A method for communicating with electronic postcards comprising:
  - a) selecting at least one input site and storing a plurality of images related to the at least one input site, wherein the at least one input site is selected from a predetermined group of input sites consisting of a gift shop, a hotel front desk, a motel front desk, and a theme park;
  - b) providing an input device at the at least one input site for receiving a postcard request from a sender visiting the at least one input site, the request including a selection of at least one of the stored images, a message and an addressee address, wherein the input device includes a printed form and a computer terminal;
  - c) establishing a verified communication link between the at least one input site and the server, wherein the verified communication link authenticates that the request for electronic postcards originates from particular ones of the predetermined group of input sites;
  - d) generating an electronic postcard in response to the request, the electronic postcard including the at least one stored image and the message;
  - e) affixing a verified postmark to the electronic postcard, the verified postmark being uniquely associated with the at least one input site; and
  - f) transmitting the electronic postcard directly to the addressee address.
14. An apparatus for generating printed postcards comprising:
  - a) a server means located at a predetermined location;
  - b) at least one input device located at an input site at a travel location remote from said server means for receiving from a sender visiting the travel location a postcard request including an addressee address, a handwritten sender message and a selection of a scene related to the travel location of said input site and not provided by the sender, wherein the at least one input site is selected from a predetermined group of input sites consisting of a gift shop, a hotel front desk, a motel front desk and a theme park;
  - c) a verified communications connection for selectively connecting said at least one input device to said server means, said at least one input device and said server means being responsive to said postcard request for transmitting an electronic postcard including a verified postmark from said server means directly to the addressee address, said electronic postcard including said at least one of a sender message and a scene related to the travel location of said input site, wherein the verified communications connection authenticates that incoming requests for electronic postcards originate from particular ones of the predetermined group of input sites; and
  - d) a payment device connected to said at least one input device for accepting at least one mode of payment from the sender.

(Emphasis added)

Applicant's claimed invention includes a method and apparatus for communicating with electronic postcards. As recited in amended Claim 1, the method according to the invention includes the steps of: a) providing a server (41) for processing electronic postcards; b) selecting at least one input site remote from the server (41), wherein the at least one input site is selected from a predetermined group of input sites consisting of a gift shop, a hotel front desk, a motel front desk and a theme park, the at least one input site accessible to a plurality of senders of electronic postcards visiting the at least one input site; c) establishing a verified communication link (40) between the at least one input site and the server, wherein the verified communication link (40) authenticates that incoming requests for electronic postcards originate from particular ones of the predetermined group of input sites; d) providing a sender input device (20) at the at least one input site for receiving input information associated with each of the senders including an addressee e-mail address; e) providing a printed form for each sender upon which the input information is recorded including a message handwritten by the sender and inputting for each sender the input information to the input device; f) generating an electronic postcard from the sender input information; and g) transmitting the electronic postcard from the at least one input site to the server (41) and from the server (41) directly to the addressee e-mail address. An apparatus for practicing the present method further includes a payment device connected to the at least one input device for accepting a mode of payment from the sender. (See amended independent Claims 1, 8, and 14).

Mayle discloses a system for creating an electronic postcard. The system includes a user computer (10) and a server (31) adapted to store and process data that is transmitted over the Internet. (Col. 5, lines 11-12, and FIG. 2). The user computer (10) is connected to the Internet by conventional protocol handshaking, and then connected to the server for creation of the electronic postcard. A user fills in the electronic postcard on the server (31) with personalized information. (Col. 7, lines 49-67). When the user is finished, the electronic postcard is saved to databases on the server and an email is sent to a recipient to view the electronic postcard on the server with a web browser. (Col. 13, lines 1-28).

Seigel was cited as a teaching of "providing a printed form for each sender upon which the input information is recorded including a message handwritten by the sender". (Office Action at page 3). In contrast to the present claims, Seigel at paragraph [0160] merely discloses

composing a message by typing on a keyboard, typing on a touch screen monitor, and hand writing text using an electronic pen and writing tablet.

Giordano was cited as a teaching of "a payment device connected to said at least one input device for accepting at least one mode of payment from the sender". (Office Action at page 7). Giordano discloses in the Abstract and at paragraph [0068] retail transaction systems, including a portable merchant transceiver that allows a vendor to authorize transactions at any location.

The cited art of Mayle, Seigel and Giordano does not disclose, teach, or fairly suggest a method and apparatus for: 1) selecting at least one input site remote from the server, wherein the at least one input site is selected from a predetermined group of input sites consisting of a gift shop, a hotel front desk, a motel front desk and a theme park, the at least one input site accessible to a plurality of senders of electronic postcards visiting the at least one input site; and 2) establishing a verified communication link between the at least one input site and the server, wherein the verified communication link authenticates that incoming requests for electronic postcards originate from particular ones of the predetermined group of input sites, as recited in the amended independent Claims 1, 8, and 14.

Specifically, Mayle describes creation of electronic cards from any personal computer with access to the Internet, and not creation of electronic postcards from a closed group of predetermined input sites as recited in the presently amended claims. Additionally, it is observed that Mayle describes the creation of a postcard on a website server over a standard, non-verified Internet link, and not over a verified communication link or connection that requires the website to authenticate that an incoming request for an electronic postcard is originating from a particular one of predetermined input sites. The secondary references of Seigel and Giordano do not teach or suggest the limitations absent from Mayle. Accordingly, Claims 1-2, 3-8, 10, 12-14, and 16-22 are patentable over any combination of the presently cited art.

It is submitted that the amended claims clearly define Applicant's invention and distinguish it from the art of record. Reconsideration of the application and a formal Notice of Allowance is respectfully solicited. If the Examiner believes that further personal

communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone Applicant's representative at (419) 874-1100.

Respectfully submitted,



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